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SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA FOOD SECURITY VISIT: FAO PROJECTS  
OBSERVED

REF: ROME 1496

1. Summary: During an 8-day trip to examine food insecurity in Ethiopia, members of a delegation led by Ambassador Tony P. Hall made field visits to two projects funded by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO): (1) a vegetable seed distribution site in Shebedino Woreda, Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR), and (2) a Telefood project to improve vegetable production at Birueh Tesfa Farmer's Association, Akaki, Addis Ababa Region. These activities appeared successful and helpful to the local target populations in improving their food security. The projects represent only a small sample of FAO's overall portfolio in Ethiopia, which includes ongoing projects valued at nearly \$3 million from regular program funds and over \$20 million from voluntary donor contributions. Active projects include livestock improvement, surveillance of animal diseases, improved animal vaccines, assessment and control of land degradation, and improved pesticide management. FAO's current activities in the country emphasize longer-term, sustainable development. The organization also has provided, in 2003 alone, over \$4 million in emergency assistance in the form of seeds and other agricultural inputs and services. FAO would be more effective in Ethiopia if it were to make a greater effort to send its very best professionals, to focus its activities in its areas of strength, and to reach out to the private sector and NGOs. End summary.

2. This is one of several reports on the April 12-19 visit of a delegation led by Ambassador Tony P. Hall (U.S. Mission to the UN Agencies in Rome) to observe, document and raise awareness of food insecurity issues in Ethiopia and the role of UN agencies and other partners in addressing these issues. See refTel for trip overview. This report covers the FAO projects visited. The full delegation visited a site near Leku, Shebedino -- located 20 km south of Awasa -- on April 14. One delegation member (Willem Brakel, Alternate Permanent Representative, U.S. Mission Rome) made a separate visit on April 16 to an FAO-supported project located 23 km SSE of Addis Ababa.

BACKGROUND: FAO IN ETHIOPIA

3. Under its Technical Cooperation Program (TCP), which is funded out of the organization's regular program budget, FAO currently has ten projects operational in Ethiopia, totaling \$2.843 million. (This figure and the breakdown below are from an FAO "Agency Profile" on Ethiopia dated 3 March 2004.) Current TCP projects include:

- urgent provision of seeds for drought-affected areas of Oromia and Amhara regions (\$773,000);
- capacity building in the livestock sector (\$422,000);
- surveillance of Rift Valley fever and other vector-borne animal diseases with trade implications (\$292,000);
- promotion of cactus pear production and use (\$334,000);
- support for pastoral communities in the Afar and Somali regions (\$341,000);
- improving livestock and poultry vaccine technology (\$374,000); and
- establishing disease-free livestock zones (\$200,000).

4. FAO has another four TCP projects in the pipeline, totaling \$1.37 million, having to do with:

-- African economic integration and food security (nearly \$298,000);

-- sustainable livelihoods for disabled young people (\$335,000);

-- community-based integrated watershed development (\$372,000); and

-- strengthening capacity for land degradation assessment and desertification control (\$365,000).

15. There are \$20.48 million in FAO Trust Fund projects currently operational. These are projects supported by voluntary contributions from bilateral donors and executed by the federal Ministry of Agriculture and (in some cases) regional authorities. Major ongoing Trust Fund activities include:

-- developing an effective pesticide management system and disposal of obsolete pesticides (\$9.2 million from Belgium, Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Japan and U.S.);

-- improving nutrition and food security in Tigray and Amhara regions (\$4.2 million from Belgium);

-- strengthening the seed supply system at the local level (\$1.5 million from Norway);

-- supporting livestock exports (\$1.5 million from Italy);

-- provision of seeds in drought-affected areas (\$3.4 million from the Netherlands and Canada) [the Shebedino project described in para 8 falls within this category]; and

-- coordination of emergency agricultural relief and rehabilitation activities (\$119,000 from U.S.).

16. There is also an FAO regional Trust Fund project for water resource management in the Nile Basin countries (\$5.25 million in total) that includes an Ethiopian component. Under the FAO/UNDP Cooperative Program there are ongoing projects valued at \$926,000 for development of national agricultural information systems, urgent relief and recovery assistance for drought-affected farmers and pastoralists, and coordination of livestock relief and recovery activities. An Italian-funded project under FAO's Special Program for Food Security (SPFS) promotes South-South cooperation on small-scale irrigation schemes.

17. Finally, since 2001, FAO has managed or is managing 13 small, community-based Telefood mini-projects (under \$10,000 each) linked to World Food Day public outreach activities, with three additional mini-projects awaiting approval. [The Birueh Tesfa scheme described in para 10-11 is a Telefood project.]

#### SHEBEDINO SEED DISTRIBUTION SITE

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18. In its visit to Leku, Shebedino, the delegation was accompanied by George Mburathi (FAO Representative in Ethiopia to the African Union and Economic Commission for Africa), Daniele Donati (Africa Emergency Coordinator, FAO Nairobi), Alex Jones (Emergency Operations Officer, FAO Rome), Luciano Mosele (Emergency Coordinator, FAO Ethiopia). It was explained that the aim of this 1-year project has been to assist 2,364 Shebedino farming households in using their land more efficiently by practicing mixed farming, improving the quality of their diet, and recovering rapidly from the 2002 drought. Some 88.4 MT of cereal seeds and 164 kg of vegetable seeds were provided to the farmers, who were actively involved in the design and implementation of the project. It was estimated that the seed assistance

contributed to the production of 1,1416 MT of grains, and on average contributed to household food needs for 4-7 months.

19. Stakeholders explained that development agents and farmers are currently being trained in order to improve crop cultivation, post-harvest management and pest control. According to a recent impact assessment, 47% of households covered by the project have become self-sufficient for the year 2004. Delegation members were impressed by the lush appearance of the site and the diversity of vegetables under cultivation, but were reminded that the intensive land use and high population densities that exist in this area can easily result in "green famine" conditions, where malnutrition and hunger occur despite the verdant surroundings.

#### BIRUEH TESFA FARMERS' ASSOCIATION

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110. The 64-member Birihue Tesfa Farmers' Association, located 3 km SW of the town of Akaki, was visited by one delegation member (Alternate Permanent Representative, U.S. Mission Rome) on April 16, accompanied by FAO's Luciano Mosele. Members of the association, established in 1989, produce cereal (under rain) and vegetable crops (under irrigation) on 47 hectares of land. Actual cultivation is carried out on an individual basis, with each household holding up to 0.6 hectares. A shortage of pumps, lack of appropriate tools and unavailability of high-quality vegetable seeds have limited farmers' productivity. With a \$10,000 grant from the Telefood program, major improvements were possible. The area under irrigation was extended, dykes were built to control flooding, and necessary inputs were provided, together with training and technical assistance.

111. It was explained that many association members were internally displaced persons (IDPs) forced to relocate from the northern border area during the war with Eritrea. Some were town dwellers without strong farming traditions or skills. With assistance from the FAO project, they have been able to improve their lot, though they still lack electricity, ready access to clean water, and a good all-weather road to move their produce to market. The plows drawn by twin-oxen teams and donkey carts provided a picturesque scene, but the farmers said they wanted tractors.

COMMENT

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112. The two projects visited, though only a small sample of ongoing FAO activities in Ethiopia, provided an illustration of the benefits the organization has been able to provide to targeted small farmers. Overall funding for FAO projects is modest compared to the value of food aid donated to Ethiopia in 2002 and 2003, but the impact of these projects is greater than the dollar figures imply, given their focus on capacity building and long-term sustainable development.

113. Notwithstanding our generally favorable impression of the projects visited, U.S. Mission Rome believes that FAO could and should be more effective in Ethiopia, given the number of lives and livelihoods at stake and the magnitude of the agricultural development challenges there. This requires strong, hands-on, field-oriented leadership at the helm of FAO's Permanent Representation in Addis Ababa, and a long-term commitment on the part of the organization to send to Ethiopia its best and brightest. FAO should do more to prioritize and focus its efforts in its areas of strength, rather than trying to be the "shadow" Ministry of Agriculture. Livestock and animal diseases may be an area of comparative advantage. Finally, we believe FAO could do more to reach out and cooperate with the private sector and

NGO community.

Hall

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